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ACROSS THE YEARS



CHARLES E. BENNETT

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ACROSS THE YEARS

Across the Years

BY

CHARLES ERNEST BENNETT



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To
M. M. B.

FOREWORD

THIS little collection of translations and adaptations from certain Latin poets had its inception in a series of attempts to arouse in undergraduate students in the classroom some slight sense of the universality of Latin poetry. From the point of view of the man behind the desk, the translator has long felt a pressing need of getting away from the conventional and traditional, in the interpretation of Classical authors to those who are entering into companionship with that glorious and delightful family. This notion has been gradually crystallizing into a number of efforts, of which this little volume comprises a part, to render in English verse some of the gems from the Roman bards which have made a special appeal.

It will be obvious to the most casual reader that many of these renderings are not "translations" at all; nor do they claim so to be. The author (I cannot now consistently say "translator") is fully aware that he has generously favored the spirit rather than the letter. Whether he has taken liberties with the text which may prove unpardonable is for the reader to decide.

C. E. B.

*Amherst, Massachusetts,
April 9, 1917.*

CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis	1
Pot Luck	21
A Narrow Escape	22
Vision of Death	24
The Simple Life	26
To the Fountain Bandusia	28
To a Light-Fingered Guest	29
Farewell to Love	31
Return to Sirmio	32
"All's Well that Ends Well"	33
"Varium et Mutabile"	35
Love's Mathematics	36
St. Venus' Eve	37
To Chloe	45
Hymn to Diana and Apollo	46
A Flight of Fancy (or better, A Fancy Flight)	47
Renunciation	49
Carpe Diem	50
Tarquin's Dream	52
The Interpretation	53
The Vampire	54
Reflections	56
"Exegi Monumentum"	57

ACROSS THE YEARS

The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis

(*Catullus, 64*)

'TIS said the pines that erst on Pelion's height
Reared their proud heads, o'er Neptune's
waves did float

To Phasis' floods and proud Aetes' land,
What time that band of chosen youth, the flower
Of Argive manhood, seeking to bear away
From Colchian realms the wondrous Fleece of Gold,
Dared with swift ship to skim the briny sea,
Sweeping the deep blue ocean-plains with oars of fir.
For them the Goddess who doth hold her seat
In topmost city-heights, with her own hand
Did frame a car to send before the breeze,
Fitting the close-matched planks of pine to the curv-
ing keel.

Such was the wondrous craft that first did teach
Wild Amphitrite of the sailor's art.

Scarcely with its prow had it cleft the wind-swept sea,
And, vexed with oars, the billow gleamed with foam,
When from the churn of hoary eddies rose
Fair Nereid faces, daughters of the sea,
In wonder at the marvel. On that day,

ACROSS THE YEARS

And none beside, did mortal eyes behold
The fair sea-nymphs, with beauteous bodies bare,
Breast-deep outstanding from the foaming flood.
'Twas then that Peleus burned with fond desire
For Thetis, nor did Thetis look with scorn
On mortal wedlock; and e'en Thetis' sire
Did set his seal unto their marriage bond.

O born in that thrice blessed golden age,
Ye heroes, hail! sprung from immortal gods;
Ye noble sons of women, hail again!
You often in my song will I address,
And thee, O Peleus, pillar of Thessaly,
So proudly honoured with the bridal torch,
To whom e'en Jupiter himself, sire of the gods,
Did yield his love. For was not Thetis thine,
Loveliest of Neptune's lovely daughters she?
And eke the aged Tethys did consent
That thou shouldst wed her nursling; yielded too
Oceanus, whose waters gird the earth.

When in due time the longed-for day had dawned,
All Thessaly assembled throngs his home;
The palace teems with a gladsome company.
Gifts in their hands they bring, and every face
Reflects the joy it feels. Deserted now
Stands Cieros; fair Tempe's vale they leave,
And Crannon, and Larissa's fortified walls;

ACROSS THE YEARS

Pharsalia now the goal of every foot,
And neath Pharsalian palace roofs they meet.
None tills the soil; the heifer's calloused neck
Grows softened; now no more the trailing vine
Is cleared with the curved rake-prongs; the tree no
more

Yields to the pruner's hook its spreading shade
With far-flung branch; no more the weary steer
With deep-set plowshare cleaves the stubborn sod;
But squalid rust steals o'er the abandoned plows.

But Peleus' house, where'er its regal halls
Unroll their endless vistas to the view,
Glistens with gleam of gold and silver sheen;
Rare ivory displays its dazzling white
Upon the couches; golden goblets glint
Along the sumptuous boards; and all the house
Gleams gay with royal treasure. In its midst
Is set the happy goddess' bridal bed
Of polished Indie ivory, and o'erspread
With purple tapestry of radiant hue
Rich with the royal tint of Tyrian shell.
This beauteous drapery, broidered with the forms
Of men of other days, with wondrous art
Portrays those ancient heroes' glorious deeds.

For looking forth from Dia's wave-washed strand
While Theseus flees with swift sail-wingéd ship,

ACROSS THE YEARS

Fair Ariadne watches, while her heart
With raging passion swells, nor scarce believes
What still her eyes behold, as, newly waked
From treacherous slumber's thrall, she finds herself
Lone and deserted on the lonely shore.
But he, unheeding, flees with churning oars,
Leaving his perjured vows to the gusty gales.

But, dimly far, upon the weed-strewn strand,
With tear-wet eyes — a Maenad carved in stone —
Stands Minos' child, and gazes all in vain,
Her bosom surging with a flood of grief.
No longer does the slender snood confine
Her golden hair ; no more the filmy veil
Her bosom hides ; no more with rounded zone
Her swelling breasts are clasped : down fallen all,
They scatter hither, thither, and the waves
Toss them before her feet. But neither then
On fate of snood or floating veil mused she ;
But all on thee, false Theseus, did she bend
Her heart, her mind, her love-lorn soul.

Ah ! woeful one,
With what unending griefs thou wert distraught
E'er since that day when cruel Theseus sailed
From out Piræus' curving bay, and gained
The island palace of the tyrannous king
In far Gortyna. For a tale they tell

ACROSS THE YEARS

How once of old, by cruel plague constrained
To expiate Androgeos' impious death,
The strength of her young manhood and the flower
Of her fair maidens Cecrops' town was wont
To send — a feast unto the Minotaur.
When thus with ills his narrow'd walls were vexed,
Prince Theseus of his own free will proffered
To render up his life for his dear town,
If so he might abate the cruel tax
Of living corpses, borne by the barge of death
From Cecrops' land to Crete.

So in swift ship

By favoring breezes onward borne, he came
To haughty Minos and his proud abodes.
And straight when him the royal maid beheld
With longing glance — she whom the dainty couch,
Breathing the balm of Eastern perfumes rare,
Once cradled in her mother's soft embrace,
Like to the myrtle flowers that grow beside
Eurotas' streams, or the many-tinted blooms
That open with the springtide's balmy breeze —
So turned she not from him her kindling gaze
Till through her inmost marrow spread the flame
And raged insatiate. Ah! thou holy boy,
Who, hard of heart, dost ever urge men on
From misery to madness, mingling woes
And joys with careless hand,—thou too, O queen

ACROSS THE YEARS

Of Golgoi and Idalium's leafy groves;
On what a surge of woe ye tossed the maid
Distraught, and sighing for her fair-haired guest.
What dread she harboured in her fainting soul!
How often, in her dull despair, she went
More palely sallow than the sheen of gold,
When Theseus, eager to face the monster foe,
Went forth to death or glorious victory.

Yet not all fruitless or in vain the gifts
She vowed to heaven, as with whispered prayer
Her altar flame she kindled. For as when
A sturdy oak, that waves its gnarled boughs
On Taurus' top, or huge cone-bearing pine
With pitchy stem — torn by the wild wind-storm
That twists with its blast the mighty trunk — with
roots

Uptorn, down falls its mighty length,
And crushes all beneath it far and wide:—
So neath the valiant blows of Theseus fell
The cruel Minotaur, tossing in vain
His horns to the unresponsive winds. Thence back
With high success the Prince retraced his steps,
Guiding his errant feet by a slender thread,
Lest, as he sought to find his dubious way
From out the mazes of the Labyrinth,
His aimless wandering might work him woe.

ACROSS THE YEARS

But why, departing from my earlier theme,
Need I relate at further length how she,
A daughter, fled her aged father's face,
Her sister's arms, her mother's fond embrace,
Who with unbounded love was wont to joy
In her unhappy daughter — and preferred
The love of Theseus to all these; or how,
Borne in his bark, to Dia's foam-white shores
She came; while he, her false and faithless lord,
With careless heart departing, left her there,
Her eyes with slumber sealed. And oft, 'tis said,
Her passionate soul to frenzied madness stung,
Shrill cries heart-deep she uttered; and anon
Would sadly scale the rugged cliffs to seek
An outlook o'er the vast sea-floods; or now,
Raising her clinging garments to her knee,
She braved the restless tide that washed the shore;
And in her dire extremity of woe
These words she uttered, while the chilling sobs
Fell from her tear-wet lips:—

“Was it for this,
Thou false one — this, false Theseus, thou didst tear
Me from my native shores, to leave me here
On this deserted strand? Ah! is it thus
Thou dost depart, unmindful of the gods,
Whose majesty thou slightest, bearing home
Thy perjured vows? Alas! Could nothing bend

ACROSS THE YEARS

Thy cruel heart? Hadst thou no pity there,
That thy relentless soul might deign to look
Upon me with compassion? For not these
The promises that once thy lips did give —
Not this it was thou badst my poor heart hope,
But joyous bonds of wedded bliss. All these
The winds of heaven scatter into naught.
Henceforth let none of womankind put trust
In oath of man, or hope for faithful vows
From false mankind. For while their eager mind
Strives to attain its end, nothing they fear
To swear; no specious promises they spare.
But when their lustful mind has had its will,
Naught reck they then of vows or perjuries.
For thee, forsooth, when thou wert all but whelmed
In the maze of death, I rescued, and could brook
To see thee slay my brother, so I prove
Not false to thee, thou false one, in thy need!
But now, for my reward, I shall be giv'n
A prey for beast and carrion-fowl to tear;
No lofty mound shall cover me in death.
What tigress bare thee neath some lonely crag?
What sea conceived and spewed thee from its waves?
What Syrtis? Scylla? or Charybdis dire,
O thou who such a guerdon dost return
For thy sweet life? E'en though thy heart's desire
Were not to wed me, since thou seem'st to dread
Thy stern sire's dread decrees, thou might'st at least

ACROSS THE YEARS

Have led me with thee to thy home, where I,
Thy slave, in willing service would abide,
To lave thy snowy feet, or spread for thee
Thy couch with purple draperies.

“Yet why,
Distraught with woe, do I lament in vain
To the unresponsive winds, which, void of sense,
Nor heed nor answer give to my complaints?
But he ere now toils in mid sea, nor aught
Of life along this lonely strand appears.
Thus in o’erweening scorn in my last hour
Doth bitter Fate begrudge to lend her ears
Unto my sad lament. Almighty Jove,
Would that in olden time those fateful ships
From Cecrops’ land had never touched our shores;
Nor, bearing to the unquelled Minotaur
His dreadful toll, had that false mariner
E’er moored to Crete his twisted ropes —that wretch
Who neath fair seemings hid his cruel schemes!
Ah! would he ne’er a welcome here had found
Within our halls!

“For whither shall I turn?
Or in what hope find refuge from despair?
To Ida’s mountains shall I fly? But no!
For stretching far between with wide abyss
The angry sea divides us. Can I hope

ACROSS THE YEARS

A father's aid, whom I of mine own will
Abandoned to pursue this youth, befouled
With mine own brother's blood? Or can I hope
For solace in a husband's faithful love
Who flees me now, bending his yielding oar
In the swirling flood? Nor aught of shelter gives
This shore, this lonely isle; e'en o'er the sea
No certain pathway of escape appears,
But angry waves surround on every side.
No way of flight — no hope; silent is all,
And all deserted — all betokens death.

“But yet mine eyes shall not be dimmed in death,
Nor sense from my worn body take its flight,
Till from the gods I seek just recompense
For my betrayal, and in my latest hour
Heaven's faith implore. Ye dread divinities,
Ye who with speedy punishment avenge
Men's deeds — daughters of Night, Eumenides,
Whose front with hissing serpent locks enwreathed
Blazons the wrath your raging bosoms breathe —
Come hither! Hither haste! Hear my complaints,
That from my inmost heart I needs must pour
In helpless passion, blind with frenzied rage.
And since from out my very being's core
They spring, let not, I pray, my agonies
Unheeded fall: but with the selfsame mind
As Theseus left me here — with like intent

ACROSS THE YEARS

May his forgetfulness on him recoil
And bring destruction on himself and his!"

As from her grief fraught breast these plaints she
poured,
Seeking requital for his heartless deeds,
The King of Heaven in sovereign majesty
Did nod assent — that nod before which earth
And the awestruck Ocean trembled, and the stars
Were shaken in the glittering firmament.
And Theseus now, his faithless mind o'erspread
With dark forgetfulness, from out his heart
Let slip the careful mandates which till now
He had preserved with steadfast loyalty.
For to his sorrowing sire no joyful sign
He lifted, to announce his safe return
To the harbor of Erechtheus. For 'tis said
That ere Aegeus gave to the winds his son
To waft afar from the Maiden Goddess' town,
These were the mandates with his last embrace
He gave the youth:—

“O precious son of mine,
Dearer to me by far than length of days,
But late restored to glad my failing years —
My son, whom now perforce I must dismiss
To doubtful hazards — since my own hard fate
And thy impetuous youth tear thee once more

ACROSS THE YEARS

From thy reluctant sire, whose dimming eyes
Not yet have had their fill beholding thee;
Not with rejoicing will I let thee go,
Nor will I suffer thee to bear the signs
Of prosperous state: but from my heart will pour
Full many a plaint, staining my hoary hairs
With dust and ashes. And when this is done,
Dark sails I'll hang upon thy swaying mast;
For well befits our grief and burning love
The canvas darkened with Iberian dye.
And yet, if she who keeps Itone's height
And of her grace defends Erechtheus' house
And all our race, doth grant thee to imbrue
Thy hand in that foul monster's blood, then see
That these my mandates live inviolate
Deep stored within thy unforgetful breast,
Nor any time efface them. So when first
Thine eyes behold our cliffs, let every yard
Put off its garb of death, and snow-white sails
Be hoisted by the twisted ropes, that I,
So soon as I behold, with gladdened heart
May recognize afar the joyful sign
That tells thy safe return in prosperous season."

These charges, held at first with steadfast heart,
From Theseus slipt away, even as clouds
Are wafted by the breath of summer winds
From the summit of a snow-clad mountain peak.

ACROSS THE YEARS

And Theseus' sire, distraught with grief and love,
Seeking a watch-place on the topmost tower,
His anxious eyes with constant weeping dimmed,
Soon as his gaze beheld the dun-stain'd sail
Plunged headlong from the summit of the cliff,
Deeming his Theseus lost by cruel fate.
And so when Theseus, flush'd with victory, came
To his father's house — a house of mourning now —
On his own head recoiled the grief that he
With heart forgetful dealt to Minos' child;
While she, still gazing toward his vanished sail,
Revolved unnumbered cares within her breast.

But broidered on another part there came
Swift bounding blooming Bacchus, with his train
Of Satyrs and Sileni, Nysa-born,
Seeking thee, Ariadne, and aflame
With love for thee. The while his votaries
In mad confusion and with minds aflame
Rushed wildly on, to the cry of "Evoe!"
And "Evoe!" crying as they tossed their heads.
Some waved the wreath-crowned thyrsi; some did toss
The rended limbs of bullocks; some had bound
With writhing snakes their necks, while others bore
In state the mystic caskets that concealed
From eyes profane the Bacchic mysteries.
Others with palms upraised beat on the drums,
Or from the burnished cymbals summoned forth

ACROSS THE YEARS

A martial clangor; while in others' hands
The horns blew forth their loud and raucous blasts,
And the Phrygian flute droned its horrid wail.

Such were the broidered figures that adorned
The splendid tapestry, whose clinging folds
Covered the happy goddess' bridal bed.

When now the wondering youth had had their fill
Of eager gazing, they began to yield
In favor of the blessed gods. And now,
As Zephyrus, roughening with his morning breeze
The placid sea, stirs from their sleep the waves,
As neath the threshold of the wandering Sun
The golden Dawn arises — and at first
Slowly they heave, rocked by the gentle breeze,
And lightly splash with lilting laughter's sound;
But with the freshening wind, thicker they crowd,
And gleam in the rosy light as they float away;—
So from the shelter of the royal porch
Homeward the folk with wandering feet depart.

First of the gods, from Pelion's rugged height
With sylvan gifts, Chiron the Centaur came.
For all the lovely flowers the meadows bear,
Or Thessaly's towering mountain heights, and all
That warm Favonius with his kindly breath
Summons to life beside the running streams —

ACROSS THE YEARS

All these in sweet confusion did he bear ;
And Peleus' house, caressed with soft perfume,
Breaks forth in smiles.

Then straightway Peneos came
Leaving his verdant Tempe, with its fringe
Of dusky forest, to the thronging choirs
Of lithe Magnesians in Doric dance.
Nor empty-handed comes he ; for he brings
Tall beeches, by their roots uptorn, nor lacks
The smooth-stemmed laurel, or the nodding plane,
The poplar, and the towering cypress. These
In close array he ranges round the house ;
And sheltered by the tender foliage,
The entrance stands a mass of living green.

Next comes Prometheus of the crafty mind,
Wearing more lightly with the passing years
The traces of his ancient punishment,
When from the rugged Scythian crags he hung
With fettered limbs. Then came the sire of gods,
His consort, and his offspring, save for thee,
O Phoebus, and thy sister who doth dwell
In Idrus' heights. For equally with thee
On Peleus did thy sister look with scorn,
Nor deigned to honour with her company
Fair Thetis' marriage.

ACROSS THE YEARS

But when these had bent
Their limbs along the couches, and the board
Was piled with varied viands, in each pause
That marked the feast, the aged Parcae sang
In strain prophetic, while their palsied frames
With tremulous movements swayed. Their tottering
limbs

In snow-white robes were wrapt, while at their heels
A purple border ran ; but flaming red
The bands that bound each wrinkled brow ; the while
Their hands, of custom, plied their endless toil.
The left hand held the distaff, wrapped about
With soft wool-flocks ; the right now deftly drew
The fibres, and with fingers upward turned
Shaped them with care, and now with down-turned
thumb

Twisted the ever lengthening thread, and twirled
The spindle, poised by its rounded disc. Anon
The biting tooth kept smooth the slender thread,
While to their dry lips clung the bitten shreds
But now outstanding from the thread they smoothed.
Before their feet the soft white fleeces lay
In woven osier baskets. As they span,
With thin, shrill voices, from their lips divine
They poured this song prophetic, which no age
To come shall e'er accuse of falsity.

ACROSS THE YEARS

“Thou sturdy pillar of Emathia’s state,
Who now thy signal glory dost increase
By mighty deeds, and destined yet to be
More glorious in thy son — attend the song
The Sisters sing thee on this gladsome day.
But ye, who shape the web of Destiny,
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“Now Hesperus shall come, and bring to thee
Fulfilment of the bridegroom’s fond desire;
And with that favoring star shall come the bride,
To twine her lovely arms about thy neck
And charm thy soul with the sway of yielding love.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“No home ere this such loves has sheltered; ne’er
Did love unite fond hearts with such a bond
As that which joins fair Thetis to her lord,
And brings to Peleus now his goddess bride.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“From you shall spring Achilles, who shall know
No craven fear, and to his foemen known
Not by his back, but by his mighty breast;
And oft victorious in the race, outstrip
The flame-swift footsteps of the fleeting doe.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

ACROSS THE YEARS

“No hero shall compare with him in war
When Phrygian streams shall run with Trojan blood,
And when, after long siege of Troy-town’s walls,
False Pelops’ heir shall lay the city waste.

Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“His acts of prowess and his glorious deeds
Shall mothers oft attest, as they perform
The last sad rites of their own sons, the while
From their bowed heads they tear the hoary locks
And beat with feeble hands their withered breasts.

Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“For as the reaper, mid the dense wheat ears,
Mows down the grain-fields yellowing neath the sun,
So he, with steel relentless, shall lay low
The mighty corpses of the sons of Troy.

Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“Scamander’s waters shall attest his deeds,
As swift it rolls to join the Hellespont;
When, choked with weltering heaps of warriors slain,
The deep, dark stream runs warm with mingled blood.

Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“She too shall know him, who shall be assigned
A prey to death, when the high-built pyre
Shall claim the stricken maiden’s snowy limbs.

Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

ACROSS THE YEARS

“For soon as ever cruel Fate’s decree
Shall grant the war-worn sons of Greece to break
The Trojan city’s wall, by Neptune reared,
The lofty tomb shall drink Polyxena’s blood,
Who, like a victim bowing neath the sword,
With fainting limbs shall fall — a headless trunk.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“Haste then to join the fond delights of love;
Seal now the happy compact, and bring forth
The goddess bride unto her waiting lord.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.

“No more in lonely maiden state shall pine
The bride; no more her anxious mother fear
The woes of rending discord for her own,
But dream of happy children of her child.
Fly, my spindles, fly, drawing the threads.”

Such were the songs of joyous prophecy
The Parcae sang of yore from breast divine.
For in those days of old the blessed gods,
Ere yet their worship was by mortals spurned,
Scorned not to mingle in the homes of men
And show themselves to reverent mortal eyes.
For e’en the sire of gods would oft descend
Again to earth, whene’er on festal days
His solemn rites came round, and from his throne

ACROSS THE YEARS

Within his glorious temple would behold
An hundred bulls strewn prone upon the ground.
Oft roving Liber, on Parnassus' height,
Himself came forth to lead his roving bands
Of yelling Thyiads with their tossing hair;
While trooping eagerly from out their town
All Delphi joyously acclaimed the god
With smoking altars. Oft in the strife of war
Mars, or swift Triton's queen, or Vengeance dire
Themselves did lead the arméd hosts of men.
But now, since earth is steeped in lawless crime,
And Greed has banished Justice from men's souls,—
When brothers dye their hands in brothers' blood;
When sons no more the loss of parents mourn,
And lustful sires conspire to slay their sons
That they may lie in beds of nameless guilt;
When mothers dwell in shameless infamy
With the unwitting sons themselves have borne,
Nor fear to offend their proud ancestral gods —
Vext with such deeds in wild confusion wrought,
The gods have turned from us their favoring care;
Wherefore no more they deign to gather here
In such assemblies, nor to mortal eyes
As once of old, appear in light of day.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Pot Luck

(*Catullus, 13*)

RIGHT royally, Fabullus mine,
One of these days with me you'll dine,
If you'll but bring, when you appear,
Fair maid, good wine, fresh wit, good cheer.
These, I repeat, if you will bring,
Old friend, you'll banquet like a king;
For when Catullus' fortune ebbs,
His purse is full — of spider webs!
But of true love you'll get a load,
And all that's gay and *à la mode*.
I'll give you perfumes for your hair
That Cupid's self bestowed my fair.
You'll pray, I swear, when you sniff those,
The gods may make you one big NOSE!

ACROSS THE YEARS

A Narrow Escape

(*Horace, Odes, II, 13*)

HE reckoned his Arbor Day Friday,
The thirteenth at that, I'll be bound;
At no sort of sacrilege shied he
Who planted you here in my ground.

Who was it, old stump? Some assassin,
Who knifed one he'd saved from a wreck,
Or caused his old granddad to pass in
His checks by a twist of his neck?

Some heathen concocter of magic
Set up this infernal machine,
And timed it, with irony tragic,
To fall on mine innocent bean.

Us humans can never be certain,
Though we try to sift fancy from fact,
What hour Fate may ring down the curtain
On our poor little vaudeville act.

No use to stay home, with the notion
That Neptune will spare you his wrath;
You miss a cold grave in the ocean,
And slip on the soap in the bath.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Dodge War, lest a bullet may dent you—
A splinter will land in your eye,
Or a brick from a chimney present you
A pass to the Sweet By and By.

Orb *me*, how I missed by an eyebrow
A bid to Proserpina's tea,
Where Alcaeus and Sappho the highbrow
Give matinée concerts at three.

I almost heard Cerberus baying,
And witnessed poor 'Tantalus' toils,
And gazed on the Furies, displaying
The latest in serpentine coils.

Some sight! Just imagine it, can't you?
Old Orion the hunter to boot.
I'd like to have seen 'em, I grant you,
But I don't like the single track route.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Vision of Death

(*Horace, Odes, II, 14*)

SWIFTLY, alas! O Postumus, Postumus,
Glide by the years in their feverish flight;
Age lingers never, nor heedeth our piety
Death in his conquering might.

E'en though in hundreds victims thou numberest,
Daily thy life from the grave to redeem,
Merciless, pitiless, Pluto still mocketh thee,
Lord of the turbulent stream.

Dark is that stream, yet all shall encounter it,
Drawn by a doom unchanging and sure;
None shall escape, be he pauper or potentate,
Prince or the veriest boor.

Vainly we shun grim War with its slaughtering,
Vainly the wave and the tempest's wild breath;
Vain is our fear of the blight of the eastern wind,
Laden with fever and death.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Soon to Cocytus, sullenly wandering
Down through the darkness, we too must descend,
One with the band ever wearily, hopelessly
 Toiling with never an end.

Lands, home and loved ones, thou must abandon them,
Gardens and orchards that gladden thy way;
There shall no trees save the cypress funereal
 Follow their lord of a day.

Worthier heirs thy wines shall be squandering,
Carefully guarded with bolt and with bar,
Recklessly wasting thy costliest vintages,
 Flinging thy treasure afar.

ACROSS THE YEARS

The Simple Life

(*Horace, Odes, I, 20*)

OLD friend, don't think that you shall
drink

Out here your juice of Bacchus:
Cheap Sabine wines in earthen steins
You'll sip with Uncle Flaccus.

That label? Pshaw! It gives *éclat*
When friends inspect my cellar;
But well *you* may recall the day
I set the jug to mellow.

Two seats in "A" at *matinée*
I'd saved by wise selection,
And gay of heart, with early start
We sought our chosen section.

As down the aisle in single file
We walked with modest bearing,
We little knew, we careless two,
That all the folk were staring,

ACROSS THE YEARS

Till all the crowd, with clamor loud,
Their stone-carved benches spurning,
From tier to tier aroused the cheer
That welcomed your returning.

* * * * *

Then keep, say I, your "Extra Dry"
For those of Fortune's favor;
No stout Falern or old Sauterne
Shall lend my cups a flavor.

ACROSS THE YEARS

To the Fountain Bandusia

(*Horace, Odes, III, 13*)

BANDUSIA'S fountain, crystal clear,
Sweet flowers, and wine of yester-year
Shall be thy worthy meed;
And with tomorrow's rising morn
A firstling kid, whose budding horn
Of love and wanton strife doth warn,
Shall for thee bleed.

In vain his lusty pomp and pride,
For with his life-blood's crimson tide
Thy waters he shall stain,
That still the Dog-Star's withering heat
May enter not thy cool retreat,
Where cattle quaff thy waters sweet
In thirsty train.

Thy name shall live, O beauteous spring;
All men shall listen while I sing
My love and reverence deep.
Thy dusky cave, with oaks o'erhung,
Thy mossy rocks shall e'er be sung,
Whence loud with many a babbling tongue
Thy waters leap.

ACROSS THE YEARS

To a Light-Fingered Guest

(with a penchant for Madeira table linen).

(Catullus, 12)

WHAT for, Marrucin', when you coma my house,
and we maka da eat and da drink,
You steala my nap' when I turna my back? You call
dat a joke? Wat you tink?
You cheapa da skate, you maka meestak'. You act
lik' a beega da fool.
You no beliv' me? Den mebba bimeby you beliva your
brodder Paol'.
Eef he can bring back what you steal, he will geev a
beeg dollar right offa da bat;
He knowa da jok', and he full of da fun, but b'liv'
me he no standa dat!
Aha! I get even! You no senda back da nap' dat you
pinch offa me,
I send you tree hondred worse poems as dees; so geev
him back *presto!* You see?
My nap' ees no worth beega money, I know; I can buy
him at John Wanamak';
But dees one, I like him. For why? He was giv', and
I keep him for frensheepa sake.

ACROSS THE YEARS

My cousin Giusepp' and my frienda Anton', dey send
me a dozzen from Spain.

I lika my fren'—I lika da nap'. Lik' da nose on your
face dat is plain!

ACROSS THE YEARS

Farewell to Love

(*Horace, Odes, III, 26*)

WHILE late I lived a slave to Beauty's eyes,
No doughtier champion trod the lists of Love;
But now yon wayside shrine that smiles above
Fair Venus' image claims my sacrifice.

Farewell, my arms, my lyre! Love's warfare o'er,
With sighs I yield ye to Our Lady's care.
Lie there, my smouldering torch! My bar, lie there,
Thou terror once of many a close-locked door!

O thou in Cyprus' isle who dwell'st apart,
And lands that know no blight of winter's snow,
Deal yet, I pray, one little stinging blow,
And touch, O touch my Chloe's still stubborn heart!

ACROSS THE YEARS

Return to Sirmio

(Catullus, 31)

F AIR Sirmio, of isles and all-but-isles
The loveliest gem, whate'er in limpid mere
Or boundless Ocean, Neptune's realms appear —
What poignant joy my longing heart beguiles,
To see thee now, after the weary miles
Of Thynian plains. Dream I? Or stand I here?
O what than care's surcease can be more dear,
When wearied minds lay down their load bewhiles,
And worn with toil we find our toil's reward,
By our own hearth our wonted place to take,
And rest on bed long sought, no more to roam?
Hail! lovely Sirmio! Joy with thy lord!
Rejoice! ye waters of the Lydian lake!
Peal forth in laughter, all ye sounds of home!

ACROSS THE YEARS

“All's Well that Ends Well”

(*Horace, Odes, III, 9*)

HE

“WHEN I was yo' honey lamb,
An' no black coon was twinin'
His arms around yo' neck, yo' Sam
Des beat de stars a-shinin'.”

SHE

“When I with you was all de go,
An' not dat hussy Chloe,
Miss Lydia Liza Jackson Snow
Des simply boiled with joy!”

HE

“Mis' Chloe, she's ma baby now.
Sing? Laws! dat gal's a winner!
An' play de ole pianner — Wow!
Fo' her I'd lose ma dinner!”

SHE

“I'm sweet on Mistah Rastus Brown —
His ole man rolls in money;

ACROSS THE YEARS

An' fo' dat boy I sho' would drown,
If I could save ma honey!"

HE

"But would yo' really bounce dat boy
An' be mah chickabiddy,
If I should shake dat triflin' Chloe,
An' take back mah own Liddy?"

SHE

"He sho' am han'some, dat 'ar coon,
An' you are light as fedder;
But if yo' want me, I am you'n —
We'll live an' die togedder."

ACROSS THE YEARS

“Varium et Mutabile”

(*Catullus, 70*)

MY Ladye sayes ther's nonne with whome she'd
rather wedde
Than me, though e'en Jove's selfe from Heaven
soughte her;
She *sayes*, but Womanne's Wordes to eager Lover
sedde
Wer better writte in Wynde or runnyng Water.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Love's Mathematics

(*Catullus*, 5)

O LESBIA mine,
If life and love be ours one little day,
We'll laugh at strait-laced dotards' idle prating,
Its foolish worth a single farthing rating —
If life and love be ours one little day!

Though suns may set, they sink to rise anew,
But once our life's brief light hath found its setting,
There falls the Night that brings one long forgetting,
Though suns may set, and sink to rise anew.

Give me a thousand kisses, Sweet, again
A hundred more, the thousand then repeated,
A hundred yet, and when the sum's completed,
Give me a thousand kisses, Sweet, again.

When we have reached our rapturous thousands'
end,
We'll mix the number, lest we may be knowing,
Or envious folk their evil spells be throwing
When we have reached our rapturous thousands'
end —
O Lesbia mine!

ACROSS THE YEARS

St. Venus' Eve

(*"Pervigilium Veneris"*)

SOON shall love who knows not loving; who hath
loved shall love again.

Spring new-born! Spring comes with singing! All
the world is young with Spring!

Springtime brings fond lovers' meetings; birds in
Spring their spousals sing.

E'en the woodland flings her tresses wide to greet
the bridegroom shower.

With the morrow Love's Appointress, neath her
shaded sylvan bower

Twines her many a verdurous arbor of the tender
myrtle spray,

For tomorrow Queen Dione high enthroned shall
hold her sway.

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

She, her flowery jewels strewing o'er the crimson-
ing lap of earth,

With the Zephyr's genial breezes warms the swell-
ing buds to birth;

ACROSS THE YEARS

She, our Queen, where'er she passes, showers her
gifts with kindly grace,
Dropping dew's of pearly radiance in the Night-
Wind's fragrant trace.
Glimmering tear-drops hang a-quiver, poised on
every leaf and thorn —
Jewelled beads that start and tremble, eager for the
coming morn.
Star-mist they, from heaven distilling when the
night is hushed in sleep,
Tenderly the shy buds wooing from their virgin
hoods to peep.
Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

Lo! From out her petalled crimson flames the
blush of rose new-born!
'Tis the Goddess bids her hasten, whispering 'tis her
wedding morn.
Venus' blood her hue engenders, kisses Cupid's self
doth know,
Jewels' gleam, and flame of fire, touched with flush
of sunrise glow;
Yet tomorrow shall behold her, radiant bride, all
shame apart,
Open wide the crimson glory hid within her maiden
heart.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Soon shall love who knows not loving ; who hath loved
shall love again.

'Tis Her voice that through the greenwood calls her
fairy company.

In their train a Boy goes dancing, mingling in their
maiden glee.

“Think ye Love would fare a-joying with his ar-
rows in array ?

Forth, ye Nymphs ! Love leaves his weapons — Love
is keeping holiday !

All unarmed I bade him sally ; naked bade him forth
to go,

Lest with torch or bow or arrow to the heedless
work he woe.”

Hearken, O ye Nymphs, beware him ! For is Cupid
fair to see,

And when naked goes he roving, Love is most in
panoply.

Soon shall love who knows not loving ; who hath loved
shall love again.

Lo ! They come at Venus' sending — maids as pure
as thou, I ween :

“Single is the boon we crave thee : go thy way, O
Delian Queen !

Let the blood of slaughtered wild things sully not
our sacred glade,

ACROSS THE YEARS

And untrodden be the flowers smiling neath yon
emerald shade.
Gladly would She call thee hither, could she bend
thy modesty;
Gladly would She bid thee welcome, did her rites
accord with thee.
Then in wonder shouldst thou see them, roving
bands from hill and dale,
Gathering thrice in nightly revel, ranging through
thy woodland vale.
Girt with fragrant flowery garlands mid the myrtle
bowers they throng;
Ceres lends her gracious presence, Bacchus and the
Lord of Song.
All the night shall wake with music — midnight
shall be turned to-day.
Let Dione rule the forest — Delian maiden, go thy
way!"

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

High amid the flowers of Hybla bids the Goddess
rear her throne;
There with Graces gathered round her shall she
make her mandates known.
Hybla, lavish all thy blossoms, all the gladsome
season bears;

ACROSS THE YEARS

Hybla, don thy flowery garment, wide as Enna's
plainland wears.

Hither maids of field and mountain shall the echo-
ing summons bring,

They who dwell in grove and forest, they who
haunt the stream and spring.

Thus doth call the Goddess-mother of the elf with
wings of dove;

Yet she bids them ne'er to trust him — cruel little
naked Love!

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

With tomorrow comes the dawning of the World's
first wedding-day,

When from springtime clouds descending, quicken-
ing all the year to May,

Streamed the rain, the gentle bridegroom, to the
bridal lap of earth,

Stirring all her mighty being to the wakening throes
of birth.

Then from dripping dews of heaven and the ocean's
crested foam,

Rising from the beryl caverns where the strange
green sea-things roam,

Sprang Dione, wave-engendered, sired by the fruit-
ful rain.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

She, Creatress of all being, who with potent, mystic
skill,

Deep enthroned in flesh and spirit moulds all Nature
to her will,

Poured her quickening life-tides flooding through
the sky and sea and earth,

All the wondering world enduing with the new-
found ways of birth.

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

'Twas Her hand, her Trojans leading mid the Latins
to abide,

To her princely Phrygian offspring gave a fair Lau-
rentian bride;

Gave to Mars the cloistered virgin, that from out
their seed divine

Ramnes and Quirites springing should sustain her
godlike line

Till the race of kingly heroes there with Romulus
begun

Flower at last in mighty Caesar, glorious sires' more
glorious son.

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

ACROSS THE YEARS

All the countryside rejoices, touched with Venus'
magic spell;
Country-born Love's self is reckoned, child of
Venus, who, they tell,
While the fields to life were breaking, clasped him
in her warm embrace,
With the soft caress of blossoms nurturing him to
strength and grace.
Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

Lo! Their spacious flanks reposing neath the broom-
corn's pluméd fronds,
Drowse the bulls in calm contentment, joyous in
their nuptial bonds.
With their lords in noonday shadow stand the
flocks of bleating ewes;
All the throbbing air is vocal with the wild birds'
woodland Muse.
Now by every pool and river shrill the swans in
chorus blent,
While from out the poplar's shadow thrills the
nightingale's lament,
Till the listening world in rapture hears a song of
love confest,
And forgets the pain that lingers neath the singer's
wounded breast.

ACROSS THE YEARS

She doth sing. Shall I be silent? When shall come
my Spring again?

When, as doth the twittering swallow, shall I lift
my joyous strain?

For my Muse is lost in silence — Phoebus looks on
me no more —

E'en as silence doomed Amyclae with the foeman
at her door.

Soon shall love who knows not loving; who hath loved
shall love again.

ACROSS THE YEARS

To Chloe

(*Horace, Odes I, 23*)

THOU shun'st me, Chloe, like timid fawn that
flees

To seek its mother on the pathless hill,
With foolish fear of every passing breeze
That stirs the rustling leaves with whispers still.

For if with quivering leaf the bramble shakes
Wind-stirred, or neath the brier the lizards dart,
Its little frame with sudden terror quakes,
And fears unbounded fill its trembling heart.

No Afric lion, I, nor tiger wild,
That I should seek to crush thee. Leave, I pray,
Thy mother's side, for thou'rt no more a child,
But ripe for lover's kisses e'en today.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Hymn to Diana and Apollo

(Horace, Odes, I, 21)

SING Diana, tender maidens,
Youths, the unshorn Cynthian sing;
Hymn Latona in your praises,
Deeply loved of Heaven's King.

Sing the Queen of stream and forest,
Who in Algid's summit dwells,
Dusky pines of Erymanthus,
Or in Cragus' verdant dells.

Let the praise of beauteous Tempe,
Delos, too, your song inspire,
Birthplace of our King Apollo,
Lord of quiver and of lyre.

Lift your prayers that they, averting
Famine, plague and war's wild woes
From our Caesar and his people,
Send them forth upon our foes.

ACROSS THE YEARS

A Flight of Fancy (*or better, A Fancy Flight*)

(*Being a wilful perversion of Horace, Odes, II, 20*)

SOME day, my friends, you'll see me sail
On pinions proud as any eagle;
I'll rise above this tearful vale,
No common seagull.

Though I be short on pedigree,
I, whom you call your friend, Maecenas,
No Styx shall sever you from me,
And roll between us.

Hooray! The gooseflesh on my shins
Is growing, 'less my eyes deceive me,
And swansdown on my neck begins —
Some bird, believe me!

I'll soar above the Bosphorus —
Perhaps survey Sahara later —
Safer a heap than Icarus,
The aviator.

ACROSS THE YEARS

The heathen Chinks shall gape with awe
And roll their eyes at what I'll tell 'em,
And he who drinks the reservoir
Of ancient Pelham.

Then hang no crepe upon my knob:
I need no tears that fall in showers,
No male quartet, or mourners' sob —
Friends omit flowers.

ACROSS THE YEARS

Renunciation

(*Catullus*, 8)

COME, poor Catullus, cease to play the fool,
And that thou seest lost set down as lost;
Enough that once the sun shone fair for thee,
When thou didst follow where thy loved one led —
Aye, loved as none will e'er be loved again.
For then with playful nothings sped the hours
So dear to thee, and to the maid, I ween,
Not all amiss. Aye, fair thy sun then shone.
But now cold is her love; thyself be cold,
Nor chase a dream that flees, nor wretched live,
But turn thy heart to stone, live on, endure!
Farewell, my love! Catullus now is strong,
Nor e'er unbid will seek or ask for thee.
But thou shalt grieve when thou art sought no more!
Alas! thou wretched one, what now is life?
Who now will seek thee, or who deem thee fair?
Whom wilt thou love? Or who shall call thee his?
But thou, Catullus, steel thy heart, endure!

ACROSS THE YEARS

Carpe Diem *

(*Horace, Odes, II, 3*)

FAIL not to keep, when Troubles sore oppress,
A Mind that wavers not in Storm and Stress,
And when the Winds of favoring Fortune blow,
Tempt not thy Fate by wanton Recklessness.

For never canst thou doff thy mortal Shape,
Though Sorrow like a Shroud thy Soul may drape,
Or if on some sequestered grassy Bank
Thou dost make merry with the jocund Grape.

Look to the Pine and Poplar, how they shed
A grateful coolness o'er thy weary Head,
While at thy Feet the fretting Streamlet glides
And hurries seaward down its winding Bed.

Bring Wine and Perfume hither, where still blows
The short-lived blossom of the lovely Rose,
While Youth and Fortune have their little Hour,
Ere yet the Hand of Fate your Record close.

**With apologies to Edw. Fitzgerald.*

ACROSS THE YEARS

Your Villa by the tawny Tiber's wave,
Home, Herds and Meadows — all your Heart may
 crave —

Tomorrow, will or nil, you must resign:
Your Heir shall spend what you have toiled to save.

Whether from Inachus your race you cry,
Or poor and nameless linger neath the Sky,
 Not Wealth nor Birth may stay your destined Hour,
Nor ruthless Orcus spare you by and by.

Your Life and mine may none save One discern;
Your Lot and mine revolve within the Urn.

Who knows but soon 'twill mark us for the Bark
Bound for that Bourne whence none may e'er return?

ACROSS THE YEARS

Tarquin's Dream

(Accius: fragments of the "Brutus.")

"**W**HEN to sweet sleep, as night drew on, I
gave
My frame, and slumber wrapt my wearied limbs,
Methought a shepherd led before my gaze
His fleecy flock, a sight surpassing fair;
Wherefrom he chose two rams of kindred blood,
And I the fairer of the twain did slay;
Whereat his fellow straight with threat'ning head
And lowered horns attacked me, and I fell,
And as all wounded on the ground I lay,
Behold a wondrous portent: for the sun,
Leaving his wonted rightward course, did wheel,
And backward turn his radiant flaming orb."

ACROSS THE YEARS

The Interpretation

“**K**NOW, O King, that oft in visions pass before
men unawares
All their round of daily duties, all their thoughts and
hopes and cares;
All that in their waking moments they are wont to
seek and plan —
Marvel not! But such a portent speaks a power more
than man.
So beware lest he thou deemest dull of sense, a very
sheep,
Prove to bear a heart of cunning, fraught with wis-
dom dark and deep;
Lest he drive thee from thy kingdom; for the vision
thou dost tell
Doth portend a mighty rising of thy people. Mark it
well;
Soon will fall the blow — kind heaven grant it pros-
per!—for the sun
Back once more hath turned his coursers and his right-
ward track begun.
Thus I read the wondrous portent, fraught with joy-
ous augury;
Thus the Roman state shall prosper, called to glorious
destiny!”

ACROSS THE YEARS

The Vampire

(*Horace, Odes, I, 8*)

COME, Liddy, I've a bone to pick;
'Fess up, you minx, and tell me truly
Why Sybaris is pale and sick,
Who once was plump and trim and slick —
How did you come to turn the trick
That alters him so cruelly?

Why now no more on sunny Pratt
Does he delight to show his paces,
Who thought it play to doff his hat
And do the hundred in ten flat,
Or line one out from off his bat
That emptied all the bases?

Why, shucks! That boy could put the shot
Clean o'er the westernmost horizon,
And boot the pigskin 'cross the lot;
But now he mopes upon his cot,
And shuns Doc Newport's water pot
As though 'twere deadly pizen.

ACROSS THE YEARS

No more the springboard in the tank
Is bent beneath his manly figger.
I'd really hate to draw a blank
In guessing why, but to be frank,
I have a hunch we've *you* to thank
For Sybie's lack of vigor.

Then cease to give him such a dance,
Where'er your idle fancy leads him;
He needs athletics, not romance,
Not evening clothes, but running pants.
Leave him alone — give him a chance;
The Amherst track team needs him!

ACROSS THE YEARS

Reflections

(*Ausonius, "Mosella," 225-239*)

AND as with vying arms their nimble strokes they
ply
And urge their vessel ever on in steady flight,
Lo! in the wave reflects a self-same comrade crew.
With laugh and shout the sailor-lads behold the sight,
And marvel at the phantom forms that greet their
view.

Even as when a laughing child, ere she display
Her fresh-combed locks, at careful nurse's fond behest
Within a mirror's shining surface doth behold
Her baby face, and laughs in glee at this new play,
Thinking she sees an own twin sister mirrored there;
And gives sweet kisses to her unresponsive guest,
Or clutches at the mirrored pins that bind her hair,
Or strives with eager baby fingers to enfold
The little dancing curls that cluster round her brow;—

So laugh at Nature's mimicry the sailor crew,
And joy in shadowy forms that mingle false and true.

ACROSS THE YEARS

“Exegi Monumentum”

(*Horace, Odes, III, 30*)


BEHOLD the monument my hands have reared
To outlast the eternal bronze, and towering high
O’ertop the pyramids’ majestic pile;
Untouched by envious storm, or mad north wind,
But ever changeless with the changing years.
Not wholly shall I die! There yet shall be
Some remnant of my soul unquenchable,
To wing its deathless way triumphantly
Down the dim aisles of never-ending time.
Long as the aged Pontiff toils his way
With silent Vestal, up the sacred hill
That crowns our city’s heights, I shall be sung;
Through countless ages men shall tell my name,
As one who, born of low estate, where frets
The roaring Aufidus, that barren land
Where Daunus ruled his peasant folk of old —
First to Italian numbers wed the strains
That echo still from Sappho’s ringing lyre.
Take the proud honor by thy merit won,
Melpomene, and of thy gentle grace
Crown thou my locks with fadeless Delphic bays.

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